

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

June 14, 2002

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM 1042-002

Resource Conservation and Development Program

1 **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to state the Department's support for activities undertaken by Resource Conservation and Development Councils in the designated Resource Conservation and Development areas nationwide, and in the Pacific Basin, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands, and the expectation that assistance will be provided to the Councils to the maximum extent possible by Departmental agencies.

2 **BACKGROUND**

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program was established in 1969, and has subsequently been administered, under several statutory authorities of the Department of Agriculture. Recently, the program was provided with permanent authority through amendments to subtitle H of title XV of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3451 et seq., made by section 2504 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Public Law 107-171. The RC&D program is a unique combination of private enterprise and creative federalism which encourages the integration of natural resource conservation with local economic and social objectives. Through the Secretary's designation of RC&D Areas, led by local Councils, the program establishes and improves coordination of conservation and development activities in rural areas and builds rural leadership skills to address land conservation, community development, water management, and other environmental enhancement needs.

RC&D designated areas typically cover 5 to 7 counties. Designated areas are led by RC&D Councils comprised of volunteer civic leaders, local elected officials, and other community leaders who incorporate as a non-profit organization. Each Council develops and implements an area strategic

plan that addresses their goals and objectives for improving the quality of life in the designated area. The area plans are developed with local public participation and are implemented by specific projects designed to protect and enhance sustainable use of natural resources to improve the environment, provide jobs and other economic opportunities, and improve the quality of life for people in the area.

3 POLICY

The RC&D Program is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and coordinated across USDA by the USDA RC&D Policy Advisory Board.

USDA is committed to working toward the economic, environmental, and social well-being of rural areas and in support of locally identified actions to improve the quality of life. USDA will work with RC&D Councils to achieve this shared objective. RC&D Councils are not only a constituent of USDA programs and services but are also an effective local delivery system partner. They can aid USDA agencies in strengthening program assistance and effectiveness in addressing the grass-roots needs of rural America.

4 ACTION ORDERED

Each USDA RC&D Policy Advisory Board Member Agency head, consistent with the agency's authorities and resources, shall provide assistance to RC&D Councils in designated RC&D Areas to help develop and accomplish the areas' strategic plan goals and objectives. Activities involving more than one agency shall be coordinated by the USDA RC&D Policy Advisory Board.

The Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service shall prepare a memorandum of understanding, for consideration by the USDA RC&D Policy Advisory Board and to be signed by each member agency head, to implement the policy of this memorandum.

5 EFFECTIVE DATE

The provisions of this Memorandum are effective immediately.

6 TERMINATION

This Memorandum shall remain in effect until the action ordered herein has been fully implemented.